

## ***ELECTRONIC FILING FOR BANKRUPTCY - COMING SOON TO A COMPUTER NEAR YOU***

Judge Jerry W. Venters

Electronic case filing – popularly referred to as ECF – is coming to the Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Missouri in Kansas City.

Beginning in mid-December, some attorneys filing bankruptcy cases in the Western District will be filing their cases via the Internet, rather than by mail or by courier. As the ECF system is fully implemented, participating attorneys will have electronic access to all bankruptcy cases filed in the Western District. The public will view bankruptcy case records from public access computers located at the federal courthouses in Kansas City, Jefferson City and Springfield.

Electronic case filing is a key component of the Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) system developed through the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. The system uses Internet technology to give the federal courts a new mechanism for information handling. It will enable attorneys to file pleadings from their offices using ECF-compatible equipment and software. Judges, court staff, and participating attorneys will have immediate access – at all times of the day and night – to the documents that are filed in the court. The case management component of the system will enable the courts to manage case data and documents more efficiently and effectively.

CM/ECF is currently used in four district and five bankruptcy courts around the country. Those courts have been the prototype courts for the development of the system. Since its inception in 1996, CM/ECF has handled over 15,000 cases and 175,000 documents and docket entries for a user community of 75 judges, 400 court staff, and over 1,000 attorneys who are using ECF to file their documents. Because of its initial success, CM/ECF will be expanded to all federal courts over the next few years.

The Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Missouri is one of six courts around the country that have been selected to be in the “first wave” of courts, after the prototype courts, to put ECF into operation. The District Court for the Western District of Missouri was one of the prototype courts for development of the ECF system; attorneys have been required to file all civil cases electronically in the District Court since October 1, 1999. The District Court’s successful implementation of ECF was a major factor in the Western District Bankruptcy Court’s selection to lead in the further development of ECF.

Numerous committees have been established in the Clerk’s office and have been working for several months to study, review, and develop procedures for the new system. Staff members and judges have visited bankruptcy courts in New York, Atlanta, and San Diego to observe first-hand how courts in those jurisdictions have developed and implemented ECF. A group of four Kansas City attorneys involved in bankruptcy practice on a daily basis has advised the court as well on development of the system.

The Bankruptcy Clerk’s office is providing training for attorneys and their staffs for ECF. Training sessions will be held at the Clerk’s office in the U. S. Courthouse, 400 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City. Prior to scheduling training, the attorney should complete an ECF Readiness Survey which can be obtained from the Clerk’s office. Attorney training will be prioritized based on ECF readiness and each attorney’s historical volume of filing bankruptcy cases and documents.

As attorneys and their staffs are trained, they will be expected to begin filing all documents electronically.

The CM/ECF system is designed to provide for low-cost user access to the system. Any modern PC with Internet access and Netscape Navigator 4.5 browser software will be able to access CM/ECF. Retrieving electronically filed documents requires the Adobe Acrobat PDF Reader software (or its equivalent), which is available at no cost from Adobe over the Internet. Filing documents requires the filer to have the Adobe Acrobat Reader software. Recommended system requirements are shown in detail below.

- Internet access-Commercial Grade
- Pentium - 32 megabytes RAM minimum
- Modem speed of 56 K
- Adobe Acrobat Writer 4.0 and Reader
- Netscape version 4.5 or higher

Attorneys who have used ECF in other courts have found many advantages to it, such as:

- Instant filing of pleadings and documents at any time, day or night
- Ability to view files after normal business hours
- Immediate confirmation that your pleading has been filed and notification electronically of pleadings filed by other parties with immediate access to those pleadings
- Less paper and smaller files
- Greater efficiency and savings – time not spent in making copies, mailing and postage, less use of messengers, etc.
- The system is easy to use

“We are pleased to be in the forefront of the development of ECF,” Chief Bankruptcy Judge Arthur B. Federman said. “We have done a great deal of planning, and we are excited about launching this new program. It will provide much greater and easier access to the cases filed in the Bankruptcy Court, and will result in significant efficiencies and savings for the public, attorneys, and the courts.”

For further information contact:

Roberta Kostrow  
Operations Manager  
United States Bankruptcy Court  
Western District of Missouri  
Kansas City, MO 64106  
(816) 512-1818  
[roberta.kostrow@mow.uscourts.gov](mailto:roberta.kostrow@mow.uscourts.gov)

October 11, 2000

####